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ABSTRACT

This discussion is concerned with the rationale and method of the Woodard Outreach Group Model. Included is a description of some of the theoretical and strategic matters involved with this method of working with small groups. Examples are presented illustrating ways in which the model has been modified and used with success in a variety of situations. Some of the major elements in the Woodard model discussed in this article include outreach groups, activity orientation, small group size, self-determination, self-disciplining, and group consensus. The Woodard model of outreach counseling through self-determined activities is a valuable tool not only for counselors but for any leader of small groups. One value lies in the methodology, i.e., activity-orientation, self-determination, and self-discipline, which is easily understood and may be practiced without a need for a leader who holds an academic degree and official certification. Secondly, self-determined activities provide a natural environment for social interchange and resultant personal growth. Thirdly, the leader can influence activities and behaviors in such a way that they contain skills for social change. Finally, students choose activity-oriented groups in counseling over non-directive or other interview types of counseling groups. (Author)

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THE DESIGN AND ORGANIZATION OF SELF-DETERMINING ACTIVITY-ORIENTED, OUTREACH GROUPS

by

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and

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A paper prepared for presentation at the 1978 meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Consortium of State and Regional Research Associations S. I. G., Toronto, Canada

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This discussion is concerned with the rationale and the method which will be referred to as the Woodard Outreach Group Model. There will also be a description of some of the theoretical and strategic matters involved with this method of working with small groups. Finally, examples will be presented illustrating ways in which this model has been modified and used with success in a variety of situations.

The research literature on groups is voluminous since groups are a primary interest of such fields as sociology, social psychiatry and psychology, sociometry, business, the military, and certainly of education (Seligman and Desmond, 1975; Ansbacher, 1951; Bion, 1946; Beach, 1965; Slavson, 1947; Bettelheim and Sylvester, 1947; Fairweather, 1964; Freund, 1959; Pettit, 1955; Yalom, 1970). McGrath and Altman (1966) include 2699 articles published prior to 1966 in their analysis and classification of small group research alone. For educators the group is the traditional method of operating in various teacher-learner arrangements, as well as with students working together under minimal supervision. The preponderance of the literature is concerned with a basic group structure in which some type of leader is involved, such as: teacher, foreman, trainer, counselor, psychoanalyst, corporal, den mother, priest, chairman, or coach. (Thelen, 1971; Sapir, 1967; Landecker, 1964; Rogers, 1969)

The Woodard model, while related to other designs, is a unique combination of elements which result in a powerful method for working with certain kinds of youths, at the least; more experience may demonstrate its efficacy with other types of youths as has been indicated in some preliminary work being conducted currently (e.g., groups of gifted children and youth; persons with very low self-esteem; student council members and other leadership groups; groups of the emotionally disturbed; acting-out youths; and the like).

Some of the major elements in the Woodard model which will be discussed in this article include: (1) outreach groups, (2) activity orientation, (3) small group size, (4) self-determination, (5) self-disciplining, and (6) group consensus.

1. Outreach Groups. The initial use of the Woodard model was with alienated adolescents who had spurned efforts by social service workers to involve them in any other kind of program.

During the 1930s the University of Chicago and the Y.M.C.A. had developed aggressive programs under which professionals and paraprofessionals went out to places in which alienated youths congregated. These workers were expected to become members of street gangs or, at least, to establish some kind of relationship with the adolescents. A working goal for these street workers or detached workers organg workers or community workers, as they were called by various agencies, was to move individuals and groups toward socially acceptable activity and to improve themselves through personal development.

Such work came to be described in social work literature as "reaching out" work and, eventually, "outreach work" (Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, 1974).

Outreach work implied: A. "Dealing with human needs or priorities, B. taking a collaborative approach ...(using) all possible resources, and C. taking an organized approach," i.e., with other resources and in a collaborative manner, effecting a plan to change those conditions which cause pain -- and developing methods to manage and administer such plans (Donovan, n.d., p. 8)."

Woodard's early experiences in Y.M.C.A. group work and his training at George Williams College, along with further group work experience at the Elk Grove (Illinois) Youth Center, in juvenile corrections, at Omni-House: Youth Services Bureau, as director of the Hoffman Estates (Illinois) youth services program, in the Inpost Program for emotionally disturbed students in Wheeling, Illinois School District 21, and in the Lake County

(Illinois) Youth Home, all contributed to the development of this method as one which did not require traditional agency trappings or procedures and therefore was appropriate for work with alienated youth. The fact that his groups sometimes made use of agency or school facilities was an incidental rather than a significant factor. As will be discussed later, Woodard's early experiences as well as his collegiate training also introduced other important theoretical and strategic influences.

2. Activity Orientation. The activity orientation has been alluded to in connection with the definition of "outreach" (Donovan, n.d., p. 8). Counselors have traditionally employed the technique of talking to achieve their therapy goals. Freud and his followers developed systems based upon the interpretation of patients' verbalizations. However, therapy methods involving talk have not proven to be as effective as other approaches, specifically play and other activity techniques, in working with children (Slavson, 1947; Bettelheim and Sylvester, 1947).

Moreno, as well as Adeline Starr and other Adlerians, used psychodrama as a process of symbolic acting out. Axline has described the use of play therapy in her psychotherapy with children. The usefulness of activity in working with children has been the subject of publications by a number of psychotherapists. Activity approaches in group work with children in latency, and in the transition from latency to puberty, is also well known (Bettelheim and Sylvester, 1947; Gump and Sutton-Smith, 1955, p. 755; Woltmann, 1953, p. 771; Moreno, 1953; Axline, 1947; Lieberman, 1964; Epstein and Altman, 1972; Dannefer, Brown and Epstein, 1975; Slavson, 1947).

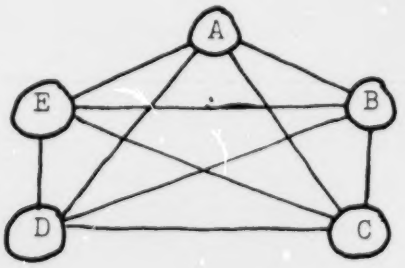
Epstein and Altman (1972, p. 93) have noted that "...when children are given an opportunity to express feelings in and through activity, the resultant catharsis results in a break through of repressed impulses and affect with subsequent changes in behavior. Peer interaction is viewed as resulting in corrective modifications of interpersonal modes of behavior, with the former being subtly encouraged by selective, nonverbal inter-

vention on the part of the therapist." Activity groups may not be successful with children characterized by some personality dysfunctions, however; Dannefer, Brown and Epstein (1975) report that an "impulse-ridden child" seemed to need the limits of more traditional therapy. But the group leader, trainer, consultant or therapist may exercise considerable influence in facilitating the development of skills of verbalization (Lieberman, 1964; Slavson, 1947).

The kinds of activity utilized in the Woodard model are determined by the group, but often involve extended camping trips and the activities required to mount such expeditions, e.g., earning money, assembling equipment, and the like. The activity may also involve other sports adventures or going to a zoo or visiting an intrinsically exciting place such as a major shopping center.

3. Small Group Size. The size of the groups is quite flexible. As will be seen in connection with the discussion of the Woodard model itself, however, there are very real strategical and practical upper and lower limits to the number of youths who effectively may be included in such a group.

If we consider the complexity of the communication and influence networks in a five-person group we find, for example, that ten diads are possible. In the operation of such a group, on any single issue, person "A" in the following diagram could conceivably be a part of one or more of thirteen sets of alliances. Of ten diads that might possibly form in such five-person groups (e.g., A-B, A-C, A-D, etc.) ten triads could form countervailing forces of influence (e.g., C-D-E, B-D-E, B-C-E, etc.); or, ten complementary diads with ten isolates in different combinations. Thus, we might easily identify a total of thirty influence combinations in even such a simple analysis as this.



This speculation is not simply a frivolous game since such intricate networks of influence and communication do occur in such groups often. Perhaps because of the normative statistical descriptions involved in much of the research on groups that has been reported, we are not so accustomed to think of the isolated group member in relation to the other group members (Berenda, 1950). We ordinarily think of groups as being intact, rather than as subject to constant fluid realignment in response to various issues and interactions. This topic will be discussed again in connection with group consensus and the examples of how groups using the Woodard model function.

In addition, in order for group process adequately to develop, reasonable upper and lower limits must be observed unless we are prepared to change many of the basic aspects of the Woodard model. Too large a group would reduce the possibilities for effective communication and negotiation; too few group members would eliminate several of the powerful growth aspects of this group model that are embedded in the intra-group negotiation encounters (Geller, 1951). For gestalt groups Martindale (1971, p. 157) suggests that the quin, or five-person group is the ideal.

A final factor affecting the size of the group is the highly practical matter of mobility. Activity often involves going from one place to another, e.g., from the home site to a camping ground. There are always problems that occur in connection with the transportation of group members, but such problems would be exacerbated by allowing the group to increase in size much beyond five or six members.

4. Self Determination. In the Woodard model, the group's activities and many of its associated actions are, in fact, determined by the group members themselves. The significant growth in group strength and the personal growth of group members that may result from this approach has been documented in the research literature on the so-called T-Group (Bradford, Gibb and Benne, 1964). As a part of the value pattern underlying the Woodard

model, self-determination is regarded as a matter of the greatest importance, as it is elsewhere (Biestek, 1957; Whittington, 1975; Berlin, 1975; Zavalloni, 1962).

The right to self-determination, at most, includes the right to: fail; choose inappropriately, choose unrealistically, oppose the goals of the agency, organization, society or group, to postpone choice, or to not choose (Soyer, 1963, p. 72). The right to determine one's choices does not necessarily include the possibility or the capacity to carry out these choices. And, of course, the concept of the kind of freedom concerned with this topic is also basic to our ideas of government (Berlin, 1975, p. 141). Woodard regards this aspect of the model as having much importance, as do the authors.

Colin Whittington (1975, p. 81) describes an alternative view suggested by Florence Hollis who "...prefers the term 'self-direction' which, she says, denotes not the absolute independence implied by self-determination but rather 'the capacity to guide oneself through the maze of interactions that make up the pattern of life'." and is "...a relative, not an absolute value." The point under discussion is somewhat remote from experience, we feel, since reasonable adults probably understand that the term "self-determination" as it is used here carries along with it a baggage of modifying and limiting realities, including:

A. the capacity of individuals to make constructive choices;
B. limitations in the societal framework, such as moral and legal restrictions;
C. limitations imposed by the sponsoring agency, such as policies, resources, liability insurance restrictions;
D. the requirement for the participation of others in order for the decision to be made;
E. the framework of reality;
F. ambivalence or lack of motivation to decide;

G. capacity of group members to make rational decisions;
H. possession of the necessary and appropriate information;
I. the availability of resources that are necessary;
J. considerations involving priorities;
K. consequent dangers to self or to others;
L. consequent violation of the rights of others;
M. the objective possibility that actions are determined, in the sense of genetic determinism, environmental determinism, or some other controlling force (Zavalloni, 1962; Biestek, 1957, p. 100; Travis and Neely, 1967, p. 503; Whittington, 1975, p. 81; Stalley, 1975, p. 93; Skinner, 1971, 1974).

It is the belief of Woodard and those associated with him that in the leader-group model the functioning of the group may be affected in ways that are not evident even to the leader himself, as in the case of experimenter bias or Rosenthal effect. While this same phenomenon may occur in a self-determining group, an alternative possibility does exist in the latter as a countervailing force. This distinction is drawn by Kline (1974, p. 457) in the following way:

> In groups with leaders, division of labor may be inadvertently assigned by the therapist. Some members may never find their potential or place. The leader may also serve as a buffer between individuals. His pressure reminds the group it needs outside regulation to preserve social harmony. The leaderless group enabled each member to find his or her particular place and skill and to borrow alternate solutions from other members. It convinced us that free interaction does not lead to disaster, and it suggested that leaders may be superfluous.

We also agree with Berzon and Solomon (1964, p. 366) on some of the major benefits of this approach, including "renewed sociability, enriched encounter and a deeper sense of self in relation to others."

One of the very practical aspects of the Woodard model is also noted by Berzon and Solomon in relation to other models of leaderless groups: "Since such groups do not depend for their existence on the presence of a professionally trained specialist, this experience can be extended to many more people than the present

short supply of mental health personnel could possibly serve (Berzon and Solomon, 1964, p. 366; cf. Seligman and Diamond, 1975, p. 288)." The effective power of the characteristic of self-determination is persuasive by itself, but arguments in its behalf are certainly enhanced by such a consideration.

5. Self-disciplining. An important part of the Woodard model involves a requirement that the members of the group deal with the consequences of their own behaviors. Most adolescents are especially responsive to this aspect of their participatory democracy, that together with their peers they set their own limits and the consequences for acting-out behavior or failure to carry out responsibilities (Slavson, 1947, p. 301). The impact of this reality orienting activity may even be experienced by group members who do not participate directly in meting out of consequences, which Moreno has called "spectator therapy" (Slavson, 1947, p. 299).

The group will respond with more vigor to some violations of the limits than others, for example, where the behavior of an individual member "...threatens to increase the anxiety of the group (Bettelheim and Sylvester, 1947, p. 686)." As group members undergo experiences together and realize how important are the contributions of each member, and as they recognize that the group offers a means for the accomplishment of wanted goals, they will also accept the inevitability of self-discipline (Kline, 1972, p. 239-240).

However, in order for useful learning to result from levying of consequences for behavior that is harmful for the group, it must be with consequences clearly established before individuals in the group embark on processes of decisionmaking, or of less rational behavior. Albert Bandura observed that "...behavior is influenced by its consequences much of the time ...(Bandura, 1974, p. 859)," and Skinner (1971, 1974) wrote at length that such influences operate most if not all of the time. "The critical factor ... is not that events occur together in time, but that people learn to predict them and to summon up appropriate anticipatory

reactions (Bandura, 1974, p. 859)."

Thus, the group decides what punishment or deprivation will be suffered for a catalog pf critical actions by group members as a part of the Woodard model. For example, if a member delays group departure at any point he may either be left behind at the beginning of a trip, or forced to lose out on some specific benefit during the trip.

All members of the group are responsible for seeing that self-discipline is enforced and, for the reasons already noted, they will usually do so. Exceptions may occur, however; the effect of the violation may be felt to be trivial, or the personal influence of the violator may be so great that it will be difficult for group members to punish him, or the punishment may be seen as not fit for the crime when it occurs, and so forth. All of this will be grist for the mill of evaluation, which is a part of the ongoing process for the adult in the group. But the group will very soon witness the harmful consequences for its enterprise of failure to carry through consistently on a predetermined program of self-discipline.

6. Group Consensus. This also is a key element in the Woodard model both for the adult who is working as a member of the group and for the other members. Several distinctions need to be made concerning the use of the term "consensus" in connection with the Woodard model.

Macrosocial consensus may be defined as

> ... a particular state of the belief system of a society. It exists when a large proportion of the adult members of a society, more particularly a large proportion of those concerned with decisions regarding the allocations of authority, status, rights, wealth and income, and other important and scarce values about which conflict might occur, are in approximate agreement in their beliefs about what decisions should be made and have some feeling of unity with each other and with the society as a whole (Shils, 1968, p. 260)

A "consensual matrix" (Shils, 1968, p. 264) constitutes the complex of shared agreements within the society, although

not all of the members need to agree on any one issue, as long as there is general agreement about each of the issues that are a part of the consensual matrix. Also, "Consensus exists in a complex interplay with dissensus. Dissensus is the state of disagreement of beliefs about allocative decisions and results (Shils, 1968, p. 263)." Lewis Lipsitz (1968, pp. 266-271) stresses the importance of consensus for the continuance of a democratic government and, therefore, its importance in work with youths.

Application of the concept to the microsocial groups under consideration here is more like normative consensus, which "...usually refers to the set of ideas and sentiments that members feel each should hold, express, or live up to in virtue of his membership and that most of them in fact do hold (Hopkins, 1964, p. 11)." Hopkins (1964, p. 12) adds that "Behavioral conformity may describe conformity with the consensual agreements shared by the group." With regard to the consensual matrix, "...members sanction one another, positively for compliance and negatively for deviance (Hopkins, 1964, p. 45)." Often the conforming actions of group members (behavioral conformity) may more closely adhere to the consensual matrix than do his individual feelings, but his behavior results in part in response to the influence of the group upon him (Hopkins, 1964, pp. 46-47).

In the Woodard model the term "consensus" means unanimous agreement concerning each of a number of important issues, as well as the general agreement previously referred to about other beliefs, attitudes and the like. Each of these important issues is "checked out in turn with each group member. If one or more group members do not agree to what the others have decided, no further action may be taken by the group until such dissensus is resolved.

Thus, a group member who tends to be passive-aggressive or obstructionistic in his behavior may stop the group's devel-

opment of arrangements for a camping trip that all of the members actually want to take. In such a case the group will have to deal with the dissenter's reasons for casting a "no" vote, or with the dissenter himself, an adventure which sometimes becomes very heated. However, the experience that each member has in holding equal power with every other member may be quite unique for him. He becomes a person of significance in the group by virtue of this power. Also, this requirement of consensus is the major control element held by the adult worker over possible extreme, destructive, or otherwise unacceptable proposals. The experience is that of the most nearly pure democracy which group members will probably ever have.

The Woodard Model. An example of the operation of the Woodard model in planning for a camping trip is presented in figure II (p. 12), beginning with the development of the "idea" for the expedition and ending with a "do it" initiation of action.

In the process of deciding upon a group activity there is a predictable pattern of interaction that unfolds within the group. First, the discussion intensifies as each member tries to put forth his or her ideas as more worthy than those of others (Phillips and Erickson, 1970). Everyone may talk at once, and shouts and threats are common as the frustration level rises. Slowly, one or two ideas for an activity gain favor and the group members begin to take sides, defending their choices. Finally, rational thinking begins to take over as the group members slowly realize the importance of consensus in making decisions.

Occasionally a power struggle such as those referred to above ensues. One die hard, relishing his strength, withholds his vote to the consternation of all. Their threats and arguments are to no avail. At such a point if there has been no provision for the arbitration of differences the adult might describe an orderly way in which to negotiate a compromise among competing points of view. Then, through give-and-take, the one dissenting member may finally become satisfied with his importance in the decisionmaking process, or his needs may have been met through

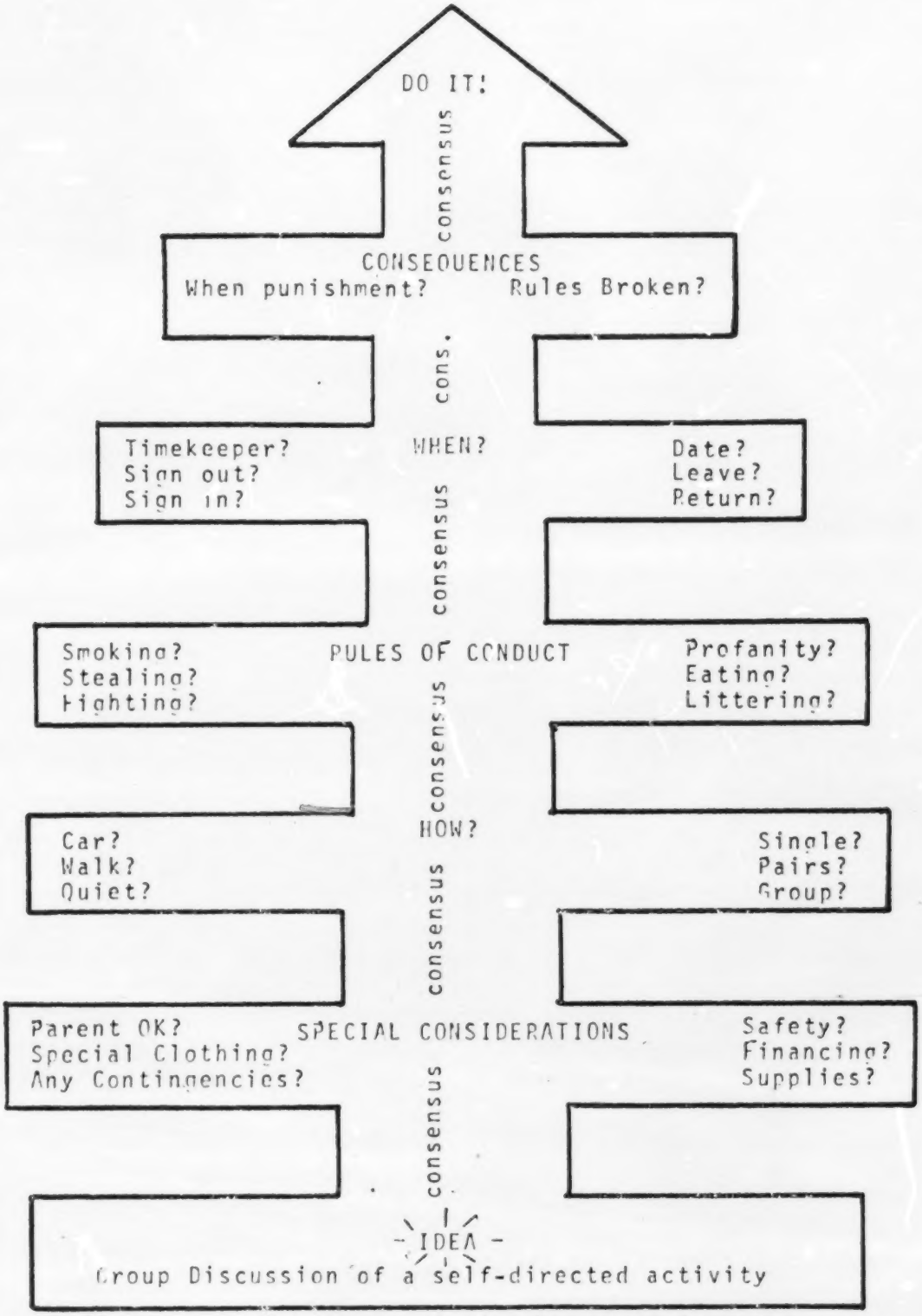


Fig. II. THE WOODARD METHOD FOR GROUP PLANNING

the activity of negotiating. Therefore he votes "yes" and the "idea" for the group activity is adopted. Interestingly, it has been found that, once the art of negotiation has been learned through this group process, it has often been practiced with parents and other adult figures who block student self-actualization, outside of the group itself.

After an idea for an activity has been adopted, the next step in the Woodard group method is to plan "when" the activity will occur. Having reach consensus on that phase of planning, the group considers "how" the activity will take place. Following the planning of "how" and contingent upon those plans, appropriate behaviors for the activity are specified by the group. Next, punitive consequences for misbehaviors are established consensually by the group members. Finally, the activity is ready to be put into action.

Even though a group is highly motivated to plan an activity in which they wish to participate, there are often many obstacles to overcome before the goal can be attained. For example, contingencies may include the cost of an activity, the distance to be travelled, use of cars or other modes of transportation, and permission of parents and others for participation. In certain activities teacher permission may be a prerequisite. Such teacher permission may be granted only after a group member has done certain things, however, such as: improving classroom behavior, increasing effort in classwork, or earning of acceptable grades.

When teacher's permission becomes a major hurdle to overcome, the group may design elaborate individual contracts, with daily checkpoints to guarentee changes acceptable to the teacher. The end product of such a contract accountability is that those students who have fulfilled their contracts within the required time will participate in the activity, and those who have not done so will stay at home.

To illustrate how the Woodard model is used with different groups to achieve their goals, the following examples are presented.

A group of student council members may be recognized as leaders in the school. For them social development and leadership experiences may be valued highly. Therefore, they may make elaborate plans for an extended camping trip for the purpose of a long, "live-in" experience involving close and interdependent activities.

In contrast to the student council members, students having behavioral disorders may view a group activity primarily as an opportunity to escape from school. Their goal demands immediate gratification with as little time as possible spent in planning. Consequently, just walking around the block for a class period or a short trip to the ice cream store may be sufficiently rewarding for them. Their need to be away from school may be satisfied through endless repitition of the same activity, and the planning for each day would consist merely of reviewing the procedures and behaviors designated in their original planning. A detailed discussion of work with such a group may be found in the paper by Fierstein (1977).

A unique group in the authors' educational setting is known as the Sevens Club. This particular group is characterized by having seven members with altruistic motivations and the desire to be of service to their society. In contrast to either the behaviorally disordered groups or the student council group, the Sevens engage in activities which are intended to improve the quality of life for others. Such activities for the Sevens might include the purchase of a refrigerated water fountain for the school, collecting Campbell soup labels in order to get new ping pong equipment, conducting a car wash to earn money for bingo prizes which, in turn, would be given to elderly persons in a residential care center, and the like.

Another type of group consisting of gifted students might select activities which are intellectually challenging, demand creativity and also considerable personal responsibility. The goals of such gifted groups are attained through activities such as

making an animated cartoon of an original story, orienteering through compass mastery and map-making, boring bogs for signs of prehistoric vegetation, and retracing the path of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Goals chosen by the gifted groups often are directed to a primary need for intellectual stimulation and experience, in the experience of the authors.

As group goals may be different from the personal goals of group members, so may the adult's goals be different from either. In a recent investigation a counselor worked with two activity-oriented groups for a period of a semester with the goal of helping to increase their self-esteem (Mayer, 1978). Using an experimental design with the twenty-four junior high school students, four groups each containing six members were established, with random assignment to the groups. An experimental group of boys and an experimental group of girls participated in the group activities for one semester. At the end of this period the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory was administered to each of the students (Coopersmith, 1967), and evaluated along with the process records which had been recorded concerning the groups as well as the individuals. While statistically significant differences were not found, both experimental groups made greater gains than the controls, and the data for individual students established the importance of such participation in an effort to enhance self-esteem.

The Woodard model of outreach counseling through self-determined activities is a valuable tool not only for counselors but also for any leader of small groups. One value lies in the methodology, i.e., activity-orientation, self-determination, self-discipline, which is easily understood and may be practiced without a need for a leader who holds an academic degree and official certification. Secondly, self-determined activities provide a natural environment for social interchange where new methods of relating by members of the groups may be tested out and accepted or rejected, with a resultant personal growth. Thirdly, the adult member has an opportunity to influence the development

of students' personalities by influencing activities and behaviors in such a way that they are not in conflict with social reality, yet contain the skills for orderly social change within the framework of a democracy. Finally, and perhaps of greatest importance, students choose activity-oriented groups in counseling over non-directive or other interview types of counseling groups (Panzica, 1975).

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